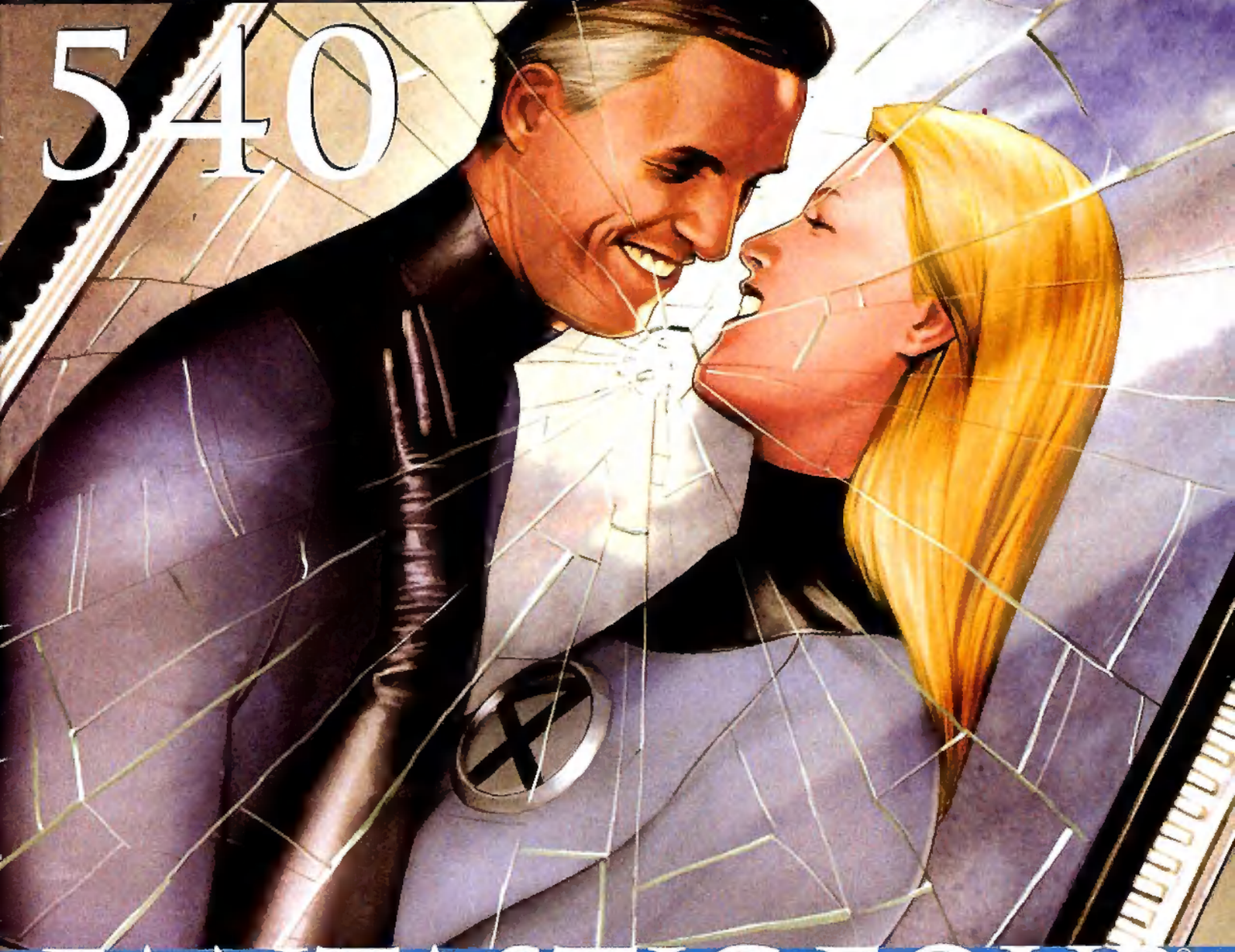

FANTASTIC FOUR®

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STRACZYNSKI

MCKONE

BAXTER BUILDING. HEADQUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
HOLD ON...I'M ADJUSTING THE NEGATIVE ZONE ACCESS POINT TO ACCEPT THE CONTAINMENT FIELD.
WHAT'S THE DELAY?
EACH CONTAINMENT FIELD IS DIFFERENT, DESIGNED TO COUNTER THE POWERS OF WHOEVER'S INSIDE. IF THOSE ENERGIES AREN'T COMPENSATED FOR, THE RESULTS WHEN IT HITS THE NEGATIVE ZONE WOULD BE...
...EXPLOSIVE, TO SAY THE LEAST.

SOME WORDS CAN NEVER BE TAKEN BACK

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I LOOK AT THE NUMBERS. I LOOK ONLY AT THE NUMBERS. THE FIGURES. THE READOUTS.
I DON'T THINK ABOUT THE RESULT, ABOUT THE PERSON IN THE CONTAINMENT TUBE ABOUT TO BE INTERRED IN A NEGATIVE ZONE PRISON. I THINK ONLY ABOUT THE NUMBERS.
AND I REALIZE--
--MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS DONE.
ONCE ZE ROCKETS GO UP, WHO CARES VERE ZEY COME DOWN--
THAT'S NOT MY DEPARTMENT--
--SAYS WERNER VON BRAUN.
TOM LEHRER. LOVED THAT SONG. HATED THE IDEA, BUT LOVED THE SONG.
NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE AT THE BUSINESS END OF A LYRIC.
I KNOW THE FEELING.
FOCUS ON THE NUMBERS, THE NUMBERS, THE NUMBERS--
KEEP AWAY FROM THE PORTAL...YOU'RE TOO CLOSE. IF THE METAL TOUCHES IT--

LOOK OUT!
STUPID...WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION... MY OWN FAULT--
DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!
KRAKOOOOM!
TAKE HER DOWN!
STILL WEAK...ONE CHANCE... HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.

NO! YOU COULD BLOW OUT THE CONTROLS! LEAVE WILDSTREAK TO ME!
NOT FAST ENOUGH... JUST AS WELL, I CAN GET HER IN THE OTHER ROOM WHERE IT'S--
--SAFER?
WHERE'D SHE GO?
HOW'D SHE GET OUT THAT FAST?
TEAM ONE TO TEAM TWO, SUBJECT HAS ESCAPED, REPEAT, SUBJECT HAS ESCAPED. SHE MAY BE EN ROUTE TO YOUR POSITION. STAND BY--
BYE.

I THINK OF ALL THE ENEMIES WE'VE FACED, THE PEOPLE WHO'VE TRIED TO SPLIT US UP, AND NOT *ONE* OF THEM COULD DO IT. NOTHING COULD.
EXCEPT *YOU*. EXCEPT *THIS*.
I DON'T KNOW YOU ANY MORE, REED. SO I HAVE TO ASK... DID I *EVER* KNOW YOU?
I'M DOING THIS FOR THE SAME REASON I'VE EVER DONE ANYTHING, SUE! BECAUSE IT'S THE LAW! BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT!
IT'S NOT RIGHT, CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?
DAMN IT, LISTEN TO ME--
NO!
--CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND, SUE?
I'M DOING THIS BECAUSE I'M TRYING TO PROTECT YOU!
PROTECT ME?

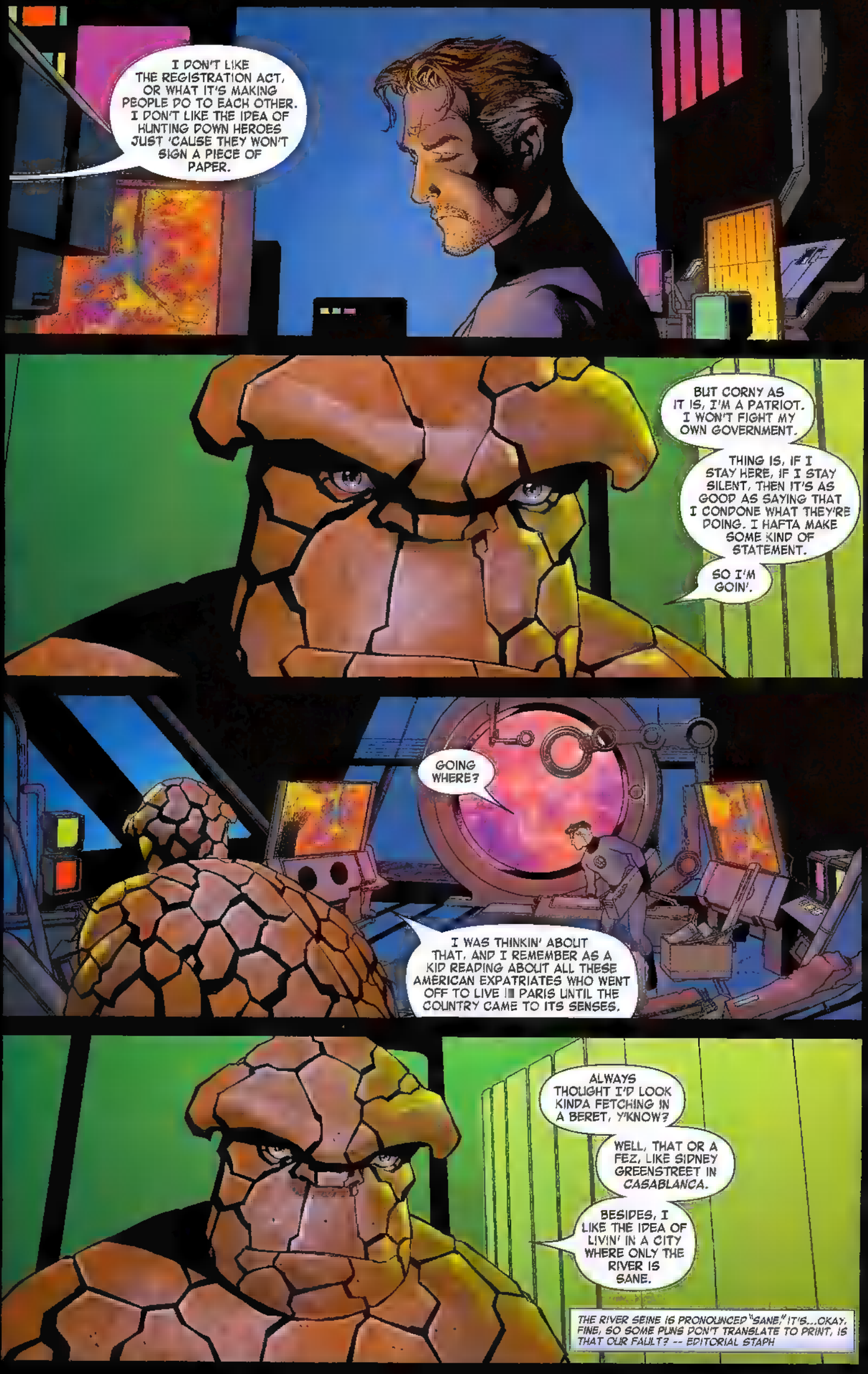
SHRAKKKKK!

SHRAKK!
SHRAKK!
DO I LOOK LIKE I NEED PROTECTING, REED?
DO I?

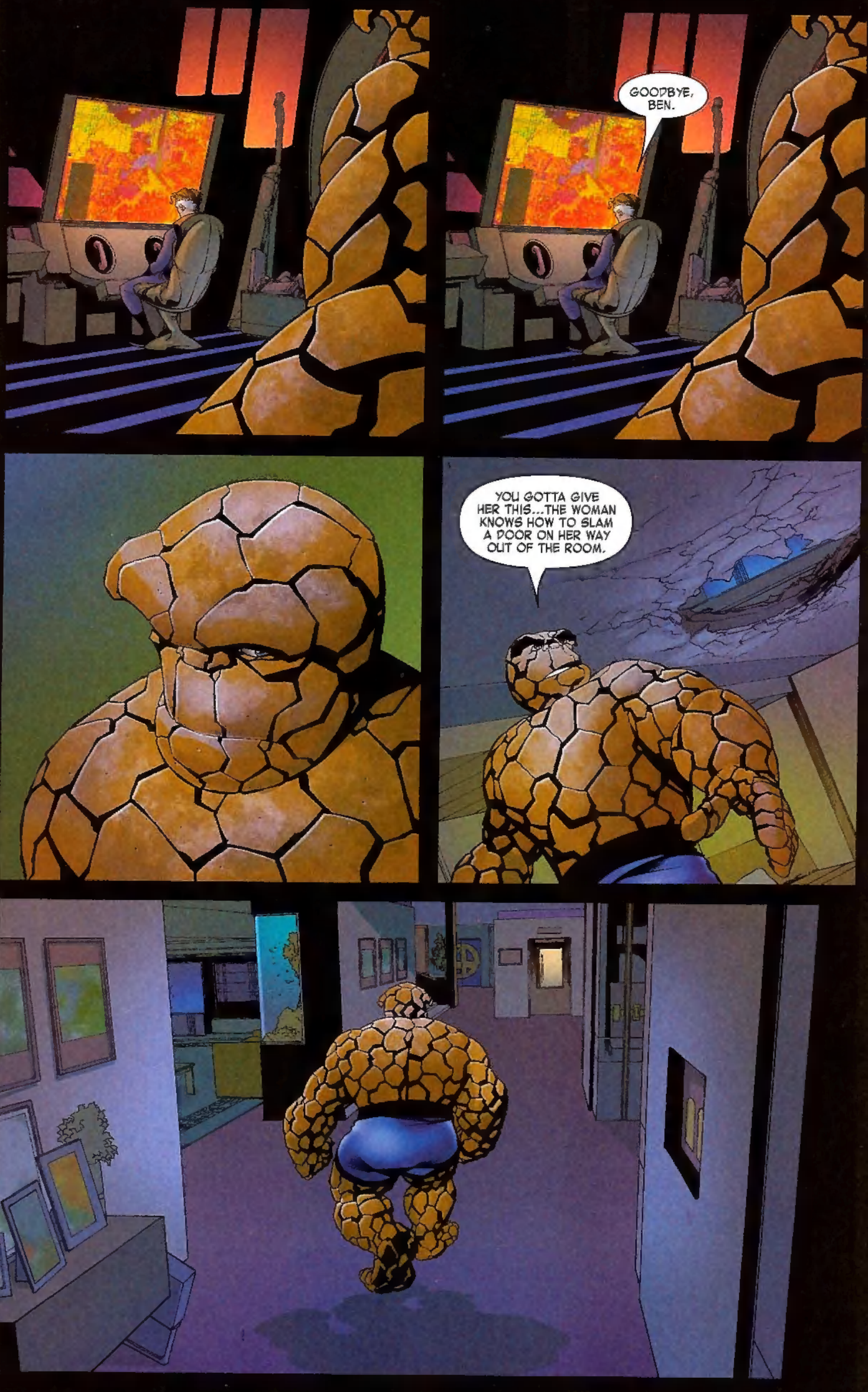
DON'T USE ME TO TRY AND JUSTIFY THE FACT THAT YOU'RE AFRAID TO GO UP AGAINST YOUR OWN GOVERNMENT! BECAUSE YOU'VE GOTTEN SO USED TO FOLLOWING THE RULES THAT YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO ANYTHING ELSE!
BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE WHAT YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD TO REBUILD!
AND IS THAT SO TERRIBLY WRONG, SUE?
IS IT?
YES, REED, IT IS.
SOMETIMES THE LAW IS WRONG. SOMETIMES THE GOVERNMENT IS WRONG. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU HAVE TO STAND UP AND SPEAK OUT. EVEN IF YOU'RE ALONE. ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE ALONE.
THE QUESTION YOU HAVE TO ASK IS NOT WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO TO PROTECT ME, OR YOUR POSITION, OR US. THE QUESTION IS--
--WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS WE SAY WE CHERISH WORTH?
BECAUSE I THINK THEY'RE WORTH DYING FOR IF NECESSARY.

REPAIR COST ESTIMATE: SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS.
JUST THINK ABOUT THE NUMBERS. DON'T THINK ABOUT THE REST. YOU CAN'T. YOU CAN'T. YOU CAN'T.
SHE'S WRONG. SHE'LL SEE THAT. SHE'LL UNDERSTAND. SHE ALWAYS DOES.
SHE'LL COME BACK.
PLEASE LET HER COME BACK.

REED? YOU AROUND? YO, STRETCH....
SO.
I'M GUESSING YOU AND SUE HAD A FIGHT.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, BEN.
WANNA TALK ABOUT SOMETHIN' ELSE THEN?
ANYTHING ELSE.
I'M LEAVIN'.
I'M LEAVIN' THE COUNTRY, REED, AND I GUESS...
...I GUESS THAT MEANS I'M LEAVIN' THE FF, TOO.


I DON'T LIKE THE REGISTRATION ACT, OR WHAT IT'S MAKING PEOPLE DO TO EACH OTHER. I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF HUNTING DOWN HEROES JUST 'CAUSE THEY WON'T SIGN A PIECE OF PAPER.
BUT CORNY AS IT IS, I'M A PATRIOT. I WON'T FIGHT MY OWN GOVERNMENT.
THING IS, IF I STAY HERE, IF I STAY SILENT, THEN IT'S AS GOOD AS SAYING THAT I CONDONE WHAT THEY'RE DOING. I HAFTA MAKE SOME KIND OF STATEMENT.
SO I'M GOIN'.
GOING WHERE?
I WAS THINKIN' ABOUT THAT. AND I REMEMBER AS A KID READING ABOUT ALL THESE AMERICAN EXPATRIATES WHO WENT OFF TO LIVE IN PARIS UNTIL THE COUNTRY CAME TO ITS SENSES.
ALWAYS THOUGHT I'D LOOK KINDA FETCHING IN A BERET, Y'KNOW?
WELL, THAT OR A FEZ, LIKE SIDNEY GREENSTREET IN CASABLANCA.
BESIDES, I LIKE THE IDEA OF LIVIN' IN A CITY WHERE ONLY THE RIVER IS SANE.
THE RIVER SEINE IS PRONOUNCED "SANE," IT'S...OKAY, FINE, SO SOME PUNS DON'T TRANSLATE TO PRINT, IS THAT OUR FAULT? -- EDITORIAL STAPH

SO.
YOU GOT ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT ALL THIS? I FIGURED YOU'D HAVE ALL KINDS OF ARGUMENTS I'D HAFTA LISTEN TO BEFORE YOU FIGURED OUT NONE OF 'EM WERE GONNA MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO MY DECISION.
NO, BEN, I DON'T HAVE ANY ARGUMENTS. I DON'T HAVE ANY WORDS LEFT INSIDE ME RIGHT NOW.
IF YOU WANT TO GO...IF IT MEANS THAT MUCH TO YOU TO GO...THEN JUST... GO.
OH.
YOU TWO DIDN'T JUST ARGUE, DID YOU?
SHE *LEFT*, DIDN'T SHE?


GOODBYE, BEN.
YOU GOTTA GIVE HER THIS...THE WOMAN KNOWS HOW TO SLAM A DOOR ON HER WAY OUT OF THE ROOM.

REDECORATING?
I'M INCLINED TO DOUBT IT.
DR. RICHARDS, ARE YOU OKAY?
FINE, I'M FINE.
BUT I--
I GOT YOUR MESSAGE, PETER, AND AS A MATTER OF FACT I SUGGESTED TO TONY THAT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO SEE THE HOLDING FACILITY WE BUILT, BEING SOMETHING OF A SCIENTIST YOURSELF.
REALLY? HE NEVER MENTIONED IT.
I'VE BEEN A BIT BUSY, PETER.
OF COURSE.
THIS'LL JUST TAKE ME A MOMENT--
BY THE WAY, WHERE'S BEN?
HE'S...DECIDED TO TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
WHAT ABOUT SUE?

PLUS WATER DAMAGE TO MULTIPLE FLOORS: SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS.
SO, DID YOU SEE EVERYTHING YOU NEEDED TO SEE?
YEAH... YEAH, I DID.
THEN WE'D BETTER GET GOING.
SURE THING, JUST GIVE ME TWO MINUTES.
WHAT'RE YOU--
TWO MINUTES. THAT'S ALL.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL BE DOWN THE HALL. HAVE TO HIT THE LITTLE SUPER HERO'S ROOM ANYWAY. AND IN ARMOR, THAT ALWAYS TAKES A WHILE...
REED?
YEAH?
ASK YOU A QUESTION?
SURE.
WHY?

SOUNDS LIKE YOUR UNCLE WAS A VERY BRAVE GUY.
YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT, PETER.
HE WAS WRONG.
WHETHER HUAC WAS RIGHT OR WRONG WASN'T THE POINT. IT WAS THE LAW.
TAKE AWAY THE LAW, AND WHAT ARE WE? SAVAGES, UP TO OUR NECKS IN BLOOD. THE LAW IS THE LAW, PETER. I SUPPORT IT BECAUSE I HONESTLY BELIEVE WE HAVE TO SUPPORT IT, NO MATTER WHAT.
PETER?
TIME TO GO.
RIGHT.
I THINK I WOULD'VE LIKED YOUR UNCLE, REED. I THINK I WOULD'VE LIKED HIM A LOT. BUT YOU--
--YOU LOVED HIM.
YOU TOO CAN BE A BIG HERO, ONCE YOU'VE LEARNED TO COUNT BACKWARDS TO ZERO.
IN GERMAN, AND ENGLISH, I KNOW HOW TO COUNT DOWN--
--AND I'M LEARNING CHINESE, SAYS WERNER VON BRAUN.
TO BE CONTINUED...